

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN JUDO

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ABSTRACT

Concerned with many of the abuses ascribed to sport, an increasing number of administrators, physical educators, coaches, and observers believe that sport has the potential to shape character. The potential impact of judo on character development is discussed in two areas: program administration and teaching behavior. Issues and practices such as gender bias, modeling, drill, explanation and demonstration, allowing judoka to participate when injured, “slaughtering an opponent,” and evaluating character development are addressed. For those who believe that the development of a judoka’s physical, mental, and moral potential as a human being is important, character development should be an important aim of instruction and competition.

INTRODUCTION

A growing number of present-day professionals in education consider concomitant learning as important or more important than primary learning. Concomitant¹ learning can be defined as the kind learning that occurs *along with* primary learning. In the study of human movement, primary learning is usually viewed as the learning of physical skills and concomitant learning as the attitudes, appreciations, and values learned along with physical skills. One of the most important kinds of concomitant learning in human movement is character development.

Many professionals in education consider character development an important aim of education, in general (Oelstrom, 2003), and sport, in particular (Arnold, 1999). Concerned with many of the abuses ascribed to athletic participation (Bandsuch, 2002), an increasing number

¹From Latin, translated as “run with.”

administrators, physical educators, coaches, and observers of sport stress the importance of ethical principles in guiding conduct and describe sport as an enterprise that has the potential to enhance moral development or shape character (Gough, 1997).

If judo attempts to “build “character, what are some of the areas or practices in it that ethics should influence? Two areas seem especially important: program administration and teaching behavior.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Those who believe judo should be concerned with character development probably should look at each specific practice with a teleological focus. What is the ultimate end of any instructional process? How does it affect or contribute to the development of senseis, students, parents, and observers as human beings? These two questions are the kind that should guide one’s view.

One aspect of the administration and implementation of any judo program which can be important for its potential to build character is leadership. Those involved in judo who consider character development important should strive to be models who lead those less knowledgeable toward truth - truth about what is rational and right in judo and life. Let’s remember what “ju-do” means - the soft (flexible or pliable) **way**, as in way of living. Leaders who are good models often possess power to produce effects greater than those led are able to engender by themselves. We can lead others to knowledge of things they do not know in the same ways we direct ourselves through the process of discovering what we do not know.

Of paramount importance for leadership is ethics. Indeed, leadership should be governed by ethics or, more precisely, good ethics (Kretchmar,

2002; Morgan and Meir, 1995). Each act should be guided by reason in an attempt to do what is right. A leader concerned with character development should be an individual who guides others toward virtue, someone who inspires others to act virtuously. Randolph Feezell (1995) alluded to the importance of virtue in leadership and sport when he observed:

There is a movement in contemporary moral philosophy, attempting to return our attention to thinking about the centrality of virtue in the moral life. Until recently the language of virtue had seemingly fallen into disfavor in our 20th-century philosophizing about moral matters. We heard much talk about the naturalistic fallacy, verificationism, the expression of attitudes, prescriptivity, universalizability, the principle of utility, and the like, but little talk about being a certain kind of person, having certain dispositions or characteristics that we have always thought to be central to living life in a civilized moral community. (p. 152)

For the judo teacher and student concerned with character development, any unethical practice that exists is cause for considerable concern. If judo should enhance character development, then one of its primary purposes should be to teach its participants to do what is morally right.

The management of most judo programs involves dealing with a considerable number of issues and practices. However, one of the most important is gender bias, especially for those concerned with the moral implications of policies and practices. It can be argued that gender bias is unethical because it is imprudent, unjust, and unreasonable to favor one

gender over another.² Moreover, unequal access or bias which is based on gender may prevent those discriminated against from realizing their full potential as human beings and achieving balance in mind, body, and spirit. Inequality or unequal access of any kind would impede almost all judokas' ability to experience the attainment the two fundamental objectives of judo described by its founder, Dr. Jigoro Kano - maximum efficiency and mutual welfare and benefit.

TEACHING BEHAVIOR

For those in judo who stress the importance of character development, one of the most significant roles that can be modeled by a teacher is that of spiritual mentor. The role of spiritual mentor embodies educational tenets that specifically focus on character development. Three important tenets are the following:

1. Judo is a cooperative experience. In other words, judoka learn from senseis and others by applying self-evident principles to certain competitive situations and, in turn, arrive at knowledge of things they did not previously know. Hopefully this knowledge leads to the pursuit of virtue.
2. Senseis do not simply stimulate students. While judoka possess an in-born potentiality for knowledge and good behavior, senseis help them actualize this potential. Thus, by giving good example physically, mentally, and morally, senseis should attempt to teach judoka to practice, compete, and live in a way which maximizes their full potential as human beings.

²See Josef Pieper's *The Four Cardinal Virtues*.

3. Teaching is centered in truth. Just as certain principles of practice and competition produce victory, they should also create good conduct. Senseis should be greatly involved in teaching these truths (principles). Senseis should model these truths.

While many teachers in judo differ in their methodology, there are few who do not use drills. Advocates of character development in judo should approve of drill as a method of teaching, especially when drills focus on or involve the mental and moral aspects of a given activity. The more the sensei emphasizes the use of mental faculties in judo, the more he or she trains the judoka's mind to make rational decisions based on the stimuli presented in each situation; the more advocates of character development should approve. Thus the sensei who trains her or his students to make effective, rational decisions in competition (e.g., in modifying strategy) can to some extent be "setting the stage" for character development. If the student carries over this rational thinking to his or her off-the-mat, personal life and acts morally right, character development proponents should approve even more so.

The carryover of a judoka's behavior into the moral realm is important because the sensei concerned with character development can sometimes be a moral cause of learning. A sensei can cause moral learning in a number of ways - for example, through modeling, persuasion, guidance, and encouragement.

Senseis frequently use explanation and demonstration. Both these methodologies might be favorably looked upon by senseis and students concerned with character development since explanation and demonstration can encourage a judoka to use mind and body to produce

knowledgeable, efficient, and rational behavior and the more one uses one's reason to guide action, the more moral behavior can become.

The practice of allowing judoka to participate when injured may be controversial, but it is still too common. Most advocates of character development in judo would probably believe this practice has questionable merit because it would often involve irrational or reckless behavior. Nature has laws that can guide and govern human conduct. These natural laws are exhibited in men and women when they employ common sense. Practicing and competing when substantially injured could be viewed as similar to consuming too much alcohol - both may violate laws of nature that involve reason, proportion, and balance. Just as a hangover suggests that nature's scale of balance is demanding payment for too much pleasure, a chronic medical condition may be nature's price for participating when injured.

On the other hand, participating when injured might be acceptable if the risks of injury are outweighed by the potential benefits to be derived from participation. Some of those concerned with character development might view participating with an injury as an opportunity to use the pain or discomfort experienced when injured in order to become a more moral person. Judo could be seen as sublimation, a creative outlet for aggression, a means by which judoka can become better beings. Thus a sensei who teaches athletes about the importance of discipline and self-sacrifice involved in participating when injured could be favorably viewed by some advocates of character development in judo.

While "slaughtering an opponent" is a practice considered not to be "intrinsically wrong" by some observers of sport (Dixon, 1995), many proponents of character development in judo might see it as

unreasonable and unethical. It could be considered unreasonable because it may suggest that the outcomes of practice and competition receive too much attention or that judo is more important than it ought to be. If one believes that judo creates a community where individuals can seek knowledge that leads to the discovery of truth, that judo is a “way of living” whose mission is education of the “whole person” (Williams, 1964); then too much emphasis on victory may be irrational or out-of-balance. “Slaughtering an opponent” might be seen as unethical or lacking in virtue because it is not prudent, courageous, or temperate to do so or to humiliate one’s opponent in the process.³

Whether an individual in judo is concerned with program administration or teaching behavior; if she or he wants to foster character development, it probably must be a primary focus of *any* activity undertaken. Thus how “good” or “bad” judoka are should not only be evaluated by the conventional criteria related to successful performance, but also by the degree to which their performance enhances their moral development and that of others. As noted above, when Dr. Jigoro Kano first established judo, he contended that its study should be based on two objectives - maximum efficiency and mutual welfare and benefit. The principle of mutual welfare and benefit is perhaps best illustrated when senseis and students manifest behaviors that enhance moral development.

An excellent example of one sensei’s on-going demonstration of the importance of character development in judo was the San Francisco Judo Institute’s Mits Kimura. Kimura-sensei practiced rather than preached. His sermon was the life he led on- and off-the-mat, a life that

³Again see Josef Pieper’s *The Four Cardinal Virtues*.

taught all who knew him to give 100% effort in practice, competition, and, most important, life. His students knew he loved them - whether they won or lost in shiai. Kimura-sensei did not speak often, but he always gave his students a few words of consolation and encouragement when they experienced defeat. In victory, he was more concerned with *how* students won (e. g., “Your tai o toshi looked good.”) than *whether* they won. In life, he suffered silently when students got into trouble (You could see the sorrow in his eyes.) and openly praised them when they did something well. In short, Kimura-sensei modeled character development.

RECOGNIZING CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

How can senseis and students know if what they do enhances or contributes to character development? What behaviors should they manifest? What behaviors should they not manifest? Two measuring instruments which are used to determine if individuals are concerned with and exhibit spiritual or moral health or behavior are Hahn and Payne’s Spiritual Health Assessment Scale and the United States Health and Human Services Spiritual Health Survey. Slightly modified versions of these instruments appear respectively in Appendix A and Appendix B. These two inventories provide some insight into behaviors that can be suggestive of character development in life, in general. But they do not tell us what kinds of specific behaviors are indicative of character development in judo.

The following list of behaviors may help senseis, students, and others concerned with identifying character development to determine if it is occurring. This list can easily be converted into statements with a scale to measure the extent to which one demonstrates or does not demonstrate a given behavior. For example:

The judoka criticizes opponents.

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

1 2 3 4

1. Criticizing opponents
2. Criticizing officials
3. Criticizing others in judo (e. g., students, teachers, parents)
4. Showing respect by bowing gracefully
5. Showing respect by wearing clean gis
6. Showing respect by demonstrating good hygiene (e. g., showering, having clean, trimmed fingernails and toenails)
7. Helping others learn judo skills
8. Helping others through other judo-related activities (e. g., driving others to shiais, cleaning up after shiais, cleaning the dojo)
9. Accepting defeat gracefully
10. Accepting victory gracefully
11. Praising (encouraging) others for good on-the-mat behavior and/or performance
12. Praising others for good off-the-mat behavior
13. Demonstrating knowledge of judo etiquette
14. Following contest rules (e.g., not engaging in prohibited acts)
15. Manifesting a good competitive attitude (e. g., not engaging in non-combative behavior)

16. Attempting to injure others
17. Using tobacco
18. Drinking alcohol
19. Using illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, ecstasy)
20. Using proscribed performance-enhancing drugs
21. Manifesting inappropriate sexual behavior (e. g., offensive language, unwanted advances)
22. "Bullying" others
23. Performing judo-related volunteer service (e. g., officiating, teaching, giving demonstrations and/or speeches)
24. Performing other kinds of volunteer community service.

Once one can determine what kinds of behaviors constitute objectives associated with character development or character developing, the next step is, as Tyler (1970) suggests, to construct activities designed to attain these objectives. This endeavor should be the subject of further investigation and research.

CONCLUSION

In short, for those in judo who truly believe that the development of a judoka's physical, mental, and moral potential as a human being is important, character development should be a primary aim of instruction and competition.

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APPENDIX A. Hahn and Payne's Spiritual Health Assessment Scale

	Rare-ly	Some-times	Us-ually	Always
1. I feel I have a belief system.	1	2	3	4
2. I recognize the contribution that membership in a community can make to a person's overall quality of life.	1	2	3	4
3. I seek experiences with nature and/or reflect on nature's contribution to my quality of life.	1	2	3	4
4. My spirituality is a resource that	1	2	3	4

helps me remain relatively clam and strong during time of stress.				
5. I have found appropriate ways to express my spirituality.	1	2	3	4
6. I respect the diversity of spiritual expression and am tolerant of those whose beliefs differ from my own.	1	2	3	4
7. I take adequate time to reflect on my own life and my relationships with others and the institutions of society.	1	2	3	4
8. I look for opportunities to support others, occasionally even at the expense of my own goals and aspirations.	1	2	3	4
9. I see myself as a person of worth.	1	2	3	4
10. I feel comfortable with my own strengths and limitations.	1	2	3	4
11. I establish realistic goals and work to achieve them.	1	2	3	4
12. I understand the differences between a normal range of emotions and signs of clinical depression.	1	2	3	4
13. I know how to recognize signs of suicidal thoughts and am willing to intervene.	1	2	3	4
14. I regularly assess my own behavior patterns and beliefs.	1	2	3	4
15. I would seek professional assistance for an emotional problem.	1	2	3	4
16. I accept the reality of aging.	1	2	3	4
17. I view aging as an opportunity for positive change.	1	2	3	4

18. I accept the reality of death.	1	2	3	4
19. I view death as a normal and evitable part of life.	1	2	3	4
20. I have made decisions about my own death to ensure that I die with dignity.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B. The United States Health and Human Services Spiritual Health Survey

	Rare -ly	Some- times	Us- ually	Always
1. I believe life is a precious gift that should be nurtured.	1	2	3	4
2. I take time to enjoy nature and the beauty around me.	1	2	3	4
3. I take time alone to think about what's important in life- who I am, what I value, where I fit in, and where I'm going.	1	2	3	4
4. I have faith in the connectedness of all living things.	1	2	3	4
5. I engage in acts of caring and good will without accepting something in return.	1	2	3	4
6. I feel sorrow for those who are suffering and try to help them through difficult times.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel confident that I have touched the lives of others in a positive way.	1	2	3	4
8. I work for peace in my interpersonal relationships, in my community, and in the world at large.	1	2	3	4
9. I am content with who I am.	1	2	3	4
10. I meditate and/or pray.	1	2	3	4

